

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF WOODSTOCK**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**  
August 5, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the City of Woodstock Environmental Commission called to order at 5:41 PM on Thursday, August 5, 2021 by Commissioner Steve Wenzel.

A roll call was taken.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ed Ellinghausen, Laurie Kacmar and Steve Wenzel.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:** Margaret Schneemann and Chairperson Erica Poremba.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Public Works Director/Staff Liaison Christina Betz and City Clerk Cindy Smiley

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Transportation Chairman Andrew Celentano

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There were no minutes presented for approval.

**4. FLOOR DISCUSSION**

**a. Public Comment**

There were no comments forthcoming from the Public

**b. Commission Comments**

There were no comments forthcoming from the Commission.

**5. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**a. Andrew Celentano and Project Lead the Way**

Transportation Commission Chairman Andrew Celentano stated as Transportation Chairman he has been working with Woodstock High School students on Project Lead the Way, noting this is a national program. He provided background on the program, noting this is the only school district/city cooperative effort in the country.

Noting Project Lead the Way is aimed at STEM students, Mr. Celentano stated each year a new group of 12-15 students join the project where they are asked to find solutions for real issues in the City of Woodstock. He stated the students are given a list of potential projects from which to choose, noting a student may create his/her own project with approval of Mr. Aymond from Public Works or Mr. Celentano.

Mr. Celentano provided examples of some of the past projects, noting because they work with the Department of Public Works and the processes the Department must follow, they get to work in the real world. He stated they investigate and study their problem/project, and do research and experiments to find answers after which they write a properly written paper, followed by a presentation to the Commission and City Council using professional presentation protocols. He stated for their efforts, the students receive a grade from the school and a letter of commendation for their college portfolio signed by Mr. Aymond and himself, noting this has successfully helped some

of the students obtain college scholarships. Mr. Celentano provided additional information on all the steps the students must follow.

In response to questions from Commissioner Wenzel, Mr. Celentano stated the students do not have to pay for the course, as District 200 pays for the materials. He stated the teacher is trained through Project Lead the Way and all students are STEM students. He confirmed this is the only municipality/school Project Lead the Way partnership in the country, noting normally it is just within the school.

In response to a request for additional information on some of the projects, Mr. Celentano talked about a project which concerned materials used for pothole patching, during which the students actually worked with the Public Works crew patching potholes as part of their research and investigation. He also provided additional information on a project concerning the roundabout.

Mr. Celentano then described the role of the Commission on the project, noting the Commissioners work with the students.

Mr. Celentano noted there are also students at the high school who are aiming for the environmental world. Commissioner Wenzel opined there are many environmental projects Project Lead the Way could do. Mr. Celentano stated he would help the Environmental Commission with the program should the Environmental Commission choose and provided information on how to get involved.

In response to questions from Commissioner Wenzel, Mr. Celentano stated there is an impact on the City Staff's time, noting this is kept to a minimum as they are so busy. He stated the liaison attends the class meeting one time per month to work with the students and answer questions. He stated when the students worked with the pothole crew, it was during normal work hours. Ms. Betz stated the Department of Public Works is happy to make this type of public outreach happen and has no concerns with scheduling Staff time. She stated when the students are going out on their own on City property, they are usually supervised by a Commission member who volunteers to do this.

Mr. Celentano described the timetable for the program, noting it will begin at the start of the school year, the end of August, and is a year-long commitment.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Celentano stated there are usually 12-15 students participating per year, noting there are not really enough Commission members to do more than that. He stated there is only one teacher at Woodstock High School for the project, noting Woodstock North High School has chosen not to participate. He stated the program needs the teacher, the Commission, and the Department of Public Works to be successful.

Mr. Celentano opined in addition to environmental students and projects working with the Environmental Commission, there may be architectural students who could benefit from working with the Historic Preservation Commission in the program.

All Commission members thanked Mr. Celentano for his presentation.

#### **b. Environmental Master Plan**

In looking at the natural resources section, Commissioner Wenzel opined there should be a management plan for this.

In reviewing past minutes, Ms. Betz stated it was the consensus of the Commission that rain gardens be placed on a future agenda. She stated the commissioners were asked to look at the plan for items they can tackle. She noted these items have been deferred as the Commission has not had a full group.

Commissioner Wenzel opined this is an opportunity to discuss improving the functionality of stormwater runoff and retention ponds in certain areas. In response to a question from Commissioner Kacmar, Commissioner Wenzel stated the City is aware of these areas, suggesting Clay Street north of the Square is one. Ms. Betz stated the City has been focusing on the Kimball and Schryver area with a CIP project, talking about this further. She stated additional property must be acquired before moving forward, opining this would improve this area for stormwater retention. She stated the City will also be doing infrastructure work with the roundabout that will correct stormwater issues in that area, noting the projects are tied together. She stated she will check on the Clay Street area mentioned by Commissioner Wenzel.

Commissioner Wenzel opined the area at Routes 14 and 47 may need some improvement.

**c. Plastic Straw Presentation Re-Cap**

Commissioner Wenzel showed examples of the high-quality paper straws being manufactured in Woodstock, noting the Commission has been discussing discouraging the use of plastic straws, but did not wish to do this unless there was a substitute. He stated these paper straws are purported to hold up longer, noting the owner has talked to the Economic Development Commission about his efforts to introduce these into the marketplace. He noted they are at Three Brothers now.

Commissioner Wenzel stated he tried this new straw, and they hold up pretty well. Ms. Betz stated her neighbor tried them and they held up well to the 24-hour test. Commissioner Kacmar stated she would like an update on the tour of the facility. Ms. Betz stated the City Council has not yet toured the facility, noting she will remind Executive Assistant Jane Howie that Commission members are interested in touring the plant, as well.

In other items, Commissioner Wenzel reminded those present that the new grant cycle for seed money is open with applications due by the end of November, noting this was the crowdsourcing mechanism for the community gardens.

He stated it was decided not to expand or improve the existing gardens this year, but to make plans for next year, if funds are available. He stated he has information on a program that matches funds, which Ms. Betz will forward to the members. She will also discuss the grant program with Grant Writer Terry Willcockson.

Commissioner Kacmar stated she went to Merryman to look at it as a possible area for a second community garden. She stated there is a huge flat area with parking, porta-potties, and a fire hydrant close, opining it has high potential for a community garden. A brief discussion to that and other possible sites ensued with Commissioner Wenzel stating expansion of the gardens this year has not been decided.

**ADJOURN**

Motion by E. Ellinghausen, second by L. Kacmar, to adjourn this regular meeting of the Environmental Commission to the next regular meeting at 5:30 PM on Thursday, September 2, 2021 in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall.

Ayes: Ellinghausen, Kacmar, and Wenzel. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: Schneemann and Chairperson Poremba. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley,  
City Clerk